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General Assembly

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Official Records

75th plenary meeting
Friday, 6 December 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 41 *(continued)*

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/512)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.20/Rev.1)

The President: This morning, the General Assembly will resume its consideration of agenda item 41, for the purpose of taking action on draft resolution A/51/L.20/Rev.1.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/51/L.20/Rev.1. The additional sponsors of the draft resolution are the Congo, France, Iceland and Norway.

The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.20/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.20/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/51/L.20/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 51/31).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 41?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 44 *(continued)*

Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly for the Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (A/51/48)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/228 and Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.31)

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/51/L.31. The additional sponsors of the draft resolution are Belize, Colombia, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Iceland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Jamaica, Kazakstan, Mauritania, Monaco, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, the Republic of Moldova, Samoa, Senegal, Slovakia, Solomon Islands, Sudan, Vanuatu and Zaire.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.31.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.31?

96-87010 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Draft resolution A/51/L.31 was adopted (resolution 51/32).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 44?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 162

Proclamation of 7 December as International Civil Aviation Day

Draft resolution (A/51/L.42)

The President: I call on the representative of Canada to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.42.

Mr. Holmes (Canada): It is my honour to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.42, entitled "Proclamation of 7 December as International Civil Aviation Day", on behalf of the delegations of Argentina, Australia, the Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Cape Verde, Chile, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Guyana, Iceland, India, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Lithuania, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Panama, Peru, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey and Venezuela, as well as Canada.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) celebrated its fiftieth anniversary on 7 December 1994. That date marked the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, done at Chicago in 1944. As part of its commemorative activities, ICAO declared that, each year, 7 December should be celebrated as International Civil Aviation Day. Since 1994, activities have been held at ICAO in Montreal and in countries around the world to mark this important event.

International civil aviation is of fundamental importance to the world. It facilitates human interaction, thereby promoting peace, friendship and understanding. Each year, over 1.3 billion people use civilian aircraft as a means of transportation. This number represents over 25 per cent of the world's population. Thanks to the efforts of ICAO, governments and the private sector, civil aviation remains the safest mode of public transportation. Civil aviation is also increasingly important for the world's economic, social and cultural development. In the last 50 years, over 350 million tons of freight have been carried by the more than 1,200 commercial airline companies worldwide. Airlines carry business persons, tourists, representatives of governments and international organizations and many others, all of whom contribute in some way to improving our lives.

ICAO plays a critical role in the development of international civil aviation, particularly in ensuring the safe utilization of the world's airways. Canada is proud to be the host country for ICAO. Yesterday, the Prime Minister of Canada acknowledged the important contribution to the world of international civil aviation and ICAO at a ceremony marking the opening of the new ICAO headquarters in Montreal.

(*spoke in French*)

The importance of civil aviation to the world should be recognized and celebrated. For this reason, the sponsors of today's draft resolution are proposing that the United Nations declare 7 December as International Civil Aviation Day. The draft resolution urges Governments as well as relevant national, regional, international and intergovernmental organizations to take appropriate steps to observe this occasion. The sponsors wish to confirm that the adoption of this draft resolution would not have budget implications.

On behalf of the sponsors, the delegation of Canada expresses its hope that this draft resolution can be adopted by consensus.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.42.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.42?

Draft resolution A/51/L.42 was adopted (resolution 51/33).

The President: I call on the representative of the United Kingdom to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): My delegation did not stand in the way of the adoption of this resolution without a vote. However, this Organization does have established guidelines with regard to the holding of international years and anniversaries and we should keep to them.

In the view of my delegation, this present decision for the holding of an International Civil Aviation Day does not fall within these guidelines, which are set out in the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67. My delegation is also of the view that the interpretation, printing and other associated costs that will be incurred as a result of this resolution are not a use of the scarce resources of the United Nations that we would wish to support, particularly in view of the current financial crisis of the Organization.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 162?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 103

Advancement of women

Observance of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery: discussion of the problem of trafficking in human persons, especially women and children

The President: The General Assembly, pursuant to resolution 50/167 of 22 December 1995, and in connection with the observance of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, will now hold a discussion of the problem of trafficking in human persons, especially women and children.

Our world is a bewildering place: full of creative and humane potential, and yet so brutal. Such morbid reflection is appropriate today as we commemorate the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery and consider the trafficking of women and girls.

A defining characteristic of these modern times is the movement of vast numbers of people across national boundaries. The relative affordability of international travel and the opening up of formerly closed frontiers have facilitated these movements. At the same time, environmental degradation and socio-political instability have caused internal displacement and increased refugee flows. The harsh reality of poverty and deprivation, punctuated by dreams of a better life in richer countries — made tantalizingly clear via modern communications — have spurred individuals to migrate, either permanently or on a temporary basis.

Unlike in earlier times, women are now more commercially active and relatively free to travel. Women therefore constitute a large proportion of these would-be immigrants. Most countries see the increase in movements of people as a threat and have rushed to put rigid immigration controls in place. These controls have had a serious adverse impact by limiting opportunities and restricting options for legal migration.

All these various factors have combined to create a widespread pattern of illegal immigration flows. These flows of people are usually facilitated by unscrupulous people, who organize the transit in return for huge profits. Such is the desperation of their existing situation that many illegal immigrants are, in fact, willing participants in their transit. They are prepared to endure hardship and live on the promise of a more secure future. For some, this hard struggle is eventually repaid by greater financial and personal security. For most, the initial hardship only begets further exploitation and misery. The chains of debt, bondage and servitude often add to the burden of their illegal status and prevent them from seeking protection in their new country of residence.

One part of the spectrum of the illegal transit of people concerns the trafficking of women and children. Normally, this heinous trade in human beings is driven by sexual exploitation. Forced labour, forced marriage and forced adoption are also to blame. Victims may be abducted, compelled by violence or blackmailed. Victims may be deceived by promises of marriage, employment or greater income for themselves and their families. The most tragic cases are those in which the victims are sold and trafficked with the complicity of parents, relatives and people known to them. Young children are the major victims of such desperation. Girls are most vulnerable because their low status and so-called sexual desirability usually merge with traditional practices, such as child marriage.

Trafficking in women and children is not a novel practice. The issue has been of grave concern to the international community for decades. For example, measures to address the trafficking of women for the purposes of sexual exploitation were the subject of one of the first multilateral human rights agreements, as far back as 1904, with the International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic. This was drafted to prevent the export of prostitutes from Europe to brothels in various parts of the colonial empire. An International Convention with the same name was

completed in 1910. The traffic in women and children was considered so important that it was included in the Covenant of the League of Nations and resulted in two international treaties. One of the early priorities of the United Nations was the preparation of the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. This Convention was adopted on 2 December 1949, the anniversary of which we recall today.

Trafficking is an illegal and clandestine practice. It is therefore virtually impossible to estimate the actual numbers of women and children affected, although available figures suggest that the problem is growing in all corners of the globe. No region is spared. Significantly, the most reliable data are available from those countries where trafficking in women has been the focus of a specific policy. Most victims have been tricked into working as prostitutes or in sex-related businesses. Accurate information on the incidence of trafficking in children is even more fragmented. However, one fact remains uncontroversial: A greater number of younger girls are absorbed into the commercial sex trade where adult female prostitution exists.

Even more disheartening are indications of a growing demand by male clients for sexual activity with very young girls and virgins. This trend is probably associated with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and with dangerous delusions that young girls are less likely to be infected with HIV.

Why does such a vile phenomenon continue to persist? Not surprisingly, rampant greed that exploits the vulnerable for quick profit is fundamental to the problem. Trafficking is a highly profitable business. Victims are powerless and unlikely to protest, as they themselves are caught up in the web of illegality. Thus, the illicit trade poses fewer risks for the trafficker.

It is ironic that, as globalization and market forces have been accepted as the keystones of greater freedom and prosperity, our most vulnerable women and children have themselves fallen victim to the global zeal for commodification. Women and children are being transformed into marketable objects to satisfy any and every demand. Not only are they exploited as bonded labour in conditions reminiscent of medieval slavery, but they are manipulated as objects for sexual gratification. Nothing exemplifies this perversity more than the modern phenomenon of "sex tourism" and the catalogues of children that are available for paedophiles and even accessible on the Internet.

Trafficking in women and children, for whatever purpose, constitutes one aspect of gross exploitation and the denial of guaranteed human rights. Such abuses remain very much a part of our world, despite the efforts of nations, through the United Nations, to carve out a vision of humanity endowed with universal values and inalienable rights. Trafficking and its attendant abuse and exploitation are crimes that reinforce the subordination of women and children.

The international community and national governments have not ignored trafficking in women and children. An array of international treaties and a substantial framework of differing approaches have been developed to tackle the problem. And yet, despite all these efforts, this organized crime continues. Many reasons can be advanced to explain this. Like most other global issues considered by the United Nations, the international community is proficient at defining and analyzing the problems of our time, but seems less able to prevent and resolve them. Solutions are of course easier to prescribe and more difficult to implement. But if we are to reach for a vision of human dignity that is universal, we must make concerted efforts to root out the fundamental causes that perpetuate such misery. Political will and social responsibility are essential ingredients of these solutions.

The persistence and apparent growth of the traffic in women and children serve as a reproach to our age. This traffic is nothing short of modern slavery and is an affront to humanity. As such, it should be treated with the abhorrence and moral outrage it deserves. All members of society must share in the responsibility to eliminate the exploitation of women and children in this manner. Only through such collective mobilization will the local, national, regional and international criminal trafficking networks be dismantled. Of primary importance are actions aimed at eliminating the gender discrimination and persistent poverty that drive the trafficking in the first place. The international legal framework is in place and should be implemented and utilized. Law enforcement authorities and social service providers must increase their coordination and emphasize preventive measures, such as better health and education.

Perhaps more important than all these are efforts needed to extinguish the shame of victims, which enables the trafficker to hide behind a cloak of secrecy and security. It is incumbent on every society and human person to ensure that the commodification and abuse of the vulnerable, the young and the helpless have no place

in our world. Each of us must step forward to guarantee the fundamental rights of those who have lost theirs.

I now call on the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: On 2 December 1949, the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others entered into force. It is entirely fitting that the General Assembly should devote today's meeting, on the occasion of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, to consideration of the global trade in human beings and, in particular, of the traffic in women and children.

Slavery is an evil which the world has rightly outlawed and condemned. It is the most shameful, degrading exploitation of human beings by other human beings. And yet, in early times slavery was an institution, an accepted part of the cultural, economic and political framework of many States. The abolition of slavery in the States where it once existed inaugurated the welcome eradication of a barbaric and inhumane practice.

On the eve of the twenty-first century, however, the international community must recognize that slavery is far from dead. On the contrary, it is very much alive. The grim reality of modern slavery requires the world community to remain ever vigilant. We must be strong in our commitment to uphold and to implement the 1926 and 1956 slavery Conventions in full. We must rededicate ourselves to the abolition of slavery in all its forms.

Today, tens of millions of people all over the world are living in slavery. In some countries, hidden slavery has still not disappeared. In others, new forms, such as debt bondage and forced labour, have become commonplace.

There can never be any excuse for the forced labour of children, for the sexual and physical abuse of servants and for the sale of women and children into prostitution.

The traffic in human beings has become a serious challenge to the entire international community. The traffic in persons is now a highly organized and international trade with links to organized crime. It is a trade which mainly affects young women and girls. It can lead to prostitution, forced domestic service and pornography. In the late twentieth century, this situation is simply intolerable.

Today, we have a public opportunity to rededicate ourselves to fighting the traffickers and to ending their shameful trade.

The realities of trafficking are stark. Physical force and abuse are widespread. Victims are often misled by promises of honest, well-paid work. They can all too easily find themselves prisoner in a foreign country with no means of support and no appeal to law. The vast majority of victims of trafficking have been placed in debt bondage by their parents, husbands or friends or are tricked or forced into it.

The mail-bride industry has induced many women into leaving their country of origin in search of a secure family life. This dream of a better future can so often turn into the nightmare of forced prostitution in a foreign land.

Women and girl victims of prostitution trafficking face the most terrible exploitation. They are usually held captive, with their passports confiscated, and are frequently subject to physical as well as sexual abuse. This is a truly global problem affecting millions of women and children. This is a traffic with profound social, economic and health care implications for countries all around the world. It is an evil trade which requires concerted and urgent national and international action.

For our part, working together with Member States, the United Nations has already made some progress in the fight against the global traffic in women and girls. We have established clear principles and guidelines for political and legislative action. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Today, however, we can and should go much further. Despite our best intentions, the global traffic in women and girls continues to grow. Despite our best efforts, too many loopholes and too many problems of implementation and application remain. Despite this, there is hope. Together, the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 and the 1996 World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children offer a comprehensive plan of action and a way forward.

The Platform for Action adopted last year in Beijing called for the complete elimination of trafficking in women and for greater assistance to victims of trafficking and prostitution. Achieving this strategic objective will not be easy. It will require concerted action by Member States and regional and international organizations.

Specifically, the Platform urged action in five areas: first, the ratification and implementation of the international conventions on trafficking and slavery; secondly, legislation protecting the rights of women and of children; thirdly, greater cooperation in the fight against organized crime and the international trafficking networks; fourthly, new resources for the rehabilitation of and health care for trafficking victims; and fifthly, preventive education and training programmes.

The Declaration and Agenda for Action adopted by the Stockholm World Congress urges action to ensure the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It calls for the commercial sexual exploitation of children to be outlawed; greater international cooperation; a renewed emphasis on education and awareness; and new laws aimed at prevention and the protection of victims.

These platforms provide new hope for the millions of women and children who are victims of trafficking. But good intentions in and of themselves cannot save one woman or child from sexual and physical exploitation. They must be translated into concrete measures, new legislation and an increase in resources at the national and international levels.

On this International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, I urge the Assembly to address these issues with urgency and a renewed sense of anger. The time for action is now.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of the Congo.

Mr. Abibi (Congo) (*interpretation from French*): Participating today on behalf of the member States of the African Group in this special meeting of the General Assembly to discuss the problem of trafficking in human persons, especially women and children, I speak with a strong sense of being the spokesperson of a continent that has paid a great price in this respect. The traffic in human persons, especially women and children, is inextricably linked to the evolution of Africa over many centuries. Many of our most worthy sons and daughters have been victims of plundering and deportation, and then been reduced to slavery far from their homelands. The stigma of these dismal centuries continues to bear witness throughout the continent to the profound impact of these evils.

We do not recall those circumstances — just one of the many sad episodes of common history — in order to blame anyone. Our goal is to explain our unequivocal condemnation of the trafficking in human persons and our commitment to waging the war that must be waged against this scourge.

Today's ceremony is a concrete step to refocus the attention of the international community on the high priority that must be given to a phenomenon that — in spite of significant progress, especially in the establishment of norms — persists in many countries, including in Africa. The problem is of the utmost importance.

And yet, the list of international instruments devoted to this problem is impressive. At the very least, it bears witness to the importance attached to this issue by the United Nations and to the complexity of the manifestations of this scourge, which is remarkably adaptive to socio-economic and cultural changes. This is not the preserve only of developing countries, because this problem is also in evidence, though in different forms, in the developed countries, as evidenced by numerous current world events. Trafficking in human persons, particularly women and children, is all the more condemnable as it affects the most fragile sectors of society.

I would like to pay a particular tribute here to the work accomplished in this field by the United Nations, other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, particularly at the normative level, from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the conclusions of the recent major international conferences. We are particularly pleased at the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted on 25 June 1993, which confirmed that the fundamental rights of women and girl children are an inalienable, integral and indissociable part of universal human rights. We are pleased with the advances embodied in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo from 5 to 13 September 1994, which appeals to all Governments to prevent all forms of trafficking in women and girl children, which is often for purposes of prostitution. We are particularly gratified by the conclusions of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995.

All of these measures, adopted by consensus, must today constitute the foundation for actions to be undertaken at the national, regional and global levels to successfully fight this scourge, which remains a subject of major concern to the entire international community, as it is a flagrant violation of the fundamental rights of

women and children in particular. These practices are incompatible with the necessary respect for the dignity and value of the human person.

Today's meeting is an opportunity to reaffirm our countries' commitment to do all in their power to abolish all forms of slavery and trafficking in human persons, especially women and children, with a view to better protecting their fundamental rights. Africa is aware that it must make enormous efforts in this struggle for the dignity of the human person. But because this phenomenon has transcontinental dimensions, Africa needs the solidarity of the entire community so that, in keeping with respect for its fundamental values, it will be able to deal a decisive blow to practices incompatible with the cardinal values of our world in the twenty-first century.

The President: I now call on the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States at this special meeting in observance of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have a historical vocation of struggle against slavery. As a result of our independence movements, our region was the first to incorporate in its various legal regimes the prohibition of slavery, which served as an encouragement and an example to other countries of the world. We profoundly regret that in spite of the advances of civilization, today there are still human beings who are subjected daily to various forms of servitude.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/167, at this meeting we must address one of the most humiliating forms of slavery in our day: the international traffic in human persons, particularly women and male and female children.

Unfortunately, the traffic in women and male and female children for sexual commerce, as well as forced prostitution, sexual abuse, sexual tourism and forced labour are growing phenomena that leave an indelible mark on the victims of these abhorrent practices.

As the Secretary-General points out in his report on the traffic in women and girls, the increase in temporary migration, the economic disparities between countries and regions and the expansion of transnational crime are factors that facilitate the forced exploitation of persons.

The member countries of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States have expressed in a number of forums our firm rejection of these practices. We consider it necessary to strengthen international cooperation in order to tackle this transnational problem with the goal of combating all aspects of the phenomenon. In this connection, we wish to reiterate our firm commitment to the measures contained in the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women relating to the fight against the traffic in women and girls, as well as to the decisions adopted in other multilateral forums for the abolition of all forms of exploitation and sexual abuse of minors and the sale of children, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In this context, it is indispensable that the traditional communications media and the more modern electronic media participate actively in these efforts. The strengthening of national legislation through harsher penalties for those who traffic in persons is also fundamental to more effectively combat these practices, which are contrary to the most essential rights of the human being.

The growing concern in all societies of the world at the continuation of the problem of the traffic in women, boys and girls has given the issue greater visibility and has established its elimination as one of the priorities on the agenda of the international community.

Latin America and the Caribbean have been and will continue to be particularly active in the establishment of mechanisms of international cooperation in order to effectively combat these grave problems. It is our hope that the attention the international community has given to these subjects will soon lead to comprehensive solutions so that in the world of tomorrow we will no longer have to hear and discuss the tragic stories of so many innocent victims of these abominable practices.

Mr. Robinson (United States of America): The violence and exploitation endured by women and children trafficked for purposes of prostitution often go beyond the exploitation suffered by other trafficked migrants. The United States Government has sought to combat trafficking in women and children through public diplomacy, law enforcement, intelligence work and, indeed, training. Several departments in the United States Government have taken actions to combat trafficking, and the Government participates in regional and international

organizations that deal with refugee, immigration and illegal-migrant smuggling issues.

United States law prohibits the transportation of individuals across State lines or national borders for the purposes of prostitution or other criminal sexual behaviour, which includes the sexual molestation of minors, rape or the production of pornography. In addition, the United States is one of approximately 12 countries to have enacted extraterritorial jurisdiction statutes to combat sex tourism. Under such a statute, criminal sexual behaviour that occurs in one jurisdiction, such as a foreign country, may be prosecuted in another, such as the United States.

It is illegal to bring migrants into the United States except through appropriate procedures and documentation. Bringing a migrant into the United States or holding a migrant already in the United States for purposes of prostitution or other immoral purposes is illegal under United States law.

In the area of enforcement, the United States Department of Justice, through the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, attacks both domestic and international cases of trafficking. The Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section investigates and prosecutes procurers and traffickers of women and children and works with women and children as victims of and as witnesses to the crimes of sexual exploitation.

Diplomatic initiatives by the United States Department of State to deter trafficking in persons include participation in bilateral, regional and multilateral initiatives to protect the rights of all migrants and to help deter trafficking in persons; urging major source and transit countries to enact laws against illegal-migrant smuggling, including stiff penalties and asset forfeiture; the revocation or denial of United States visas to individuals involved in illegal-migrant trafficking; sponsoring training in immigration, international document fraud and illegal-migrant smuggling; and participation in information exchange programs with high-level immigration and law enforcement officials.

We are also combating trafficking through domestic and international labour activities. The United States Department of Labor, through its Bureau of International Labor Affairs, has established a special unit of International Child Labor Exploitation. The Bureau of International Labor Affairs has published a two-volume study on this issue entitled *By the Sweat and Toil of Children*, the second volume of which documents child slavery, including the use of young girls as domestic servants and the trafficking of children for the purpose of prostitution. In September 1995, the Bureau of International Labor sponsored a symposium entitled "Forced Labor: The Growing Tragedy of Child Prostitution".

Since the September symposium, the United States has continued its efforts to broaden the international dialogue on forced child prostitution. In addition to an International Labour Organization (ILO) programme in Asia on girls at risk of being lured into prostitution, which is being funded by the United States, the ILO is considering additional programmes in South and South-East Asia to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Those programmes offer some hope for helping a small number of children at risk. They can also act as catalysts for broader governmental responses in the countries where forced child prostitution flourishes. The United States hopes to continue to support such programmes.

In order to stop trafficking and to assist women and children who are victimized and exploited, the United States is committed to the following goals: first, to deter sex tourism and trafficking in women and children; secondly, to improve enforcement of laws; and thirdly, to transfer information and assistance rapidly.

To effect those goals, the United States will establish international exchange programmes among law enforcement agencies to foster formal and informal working relationships. It will work with the international community to identify centres of sex tourism and trafficking in women and children. The United States will create a clearing house for information on international trafficking and encourage the international community to review and modify, where necessary, domestic laws on prostitution and trafficking. It will increase training for and coordination between national customs and immigration authorities to maximize each nation's ability to identify and bar entrance to individuals travelling for the purpose of trafficking in women and children.

The United States is taking the following initiatives to combat trafficking: first, it is providing model legislation to countries that do not have adequate laws against trafficking; secondly, it is revoking or denying visas to individuals, including Government officials, who are involved in trafficking; thirdly, it is assigning additional law enforcement personnel to major source and transit countries; fourthly, it is sponsoring additional law enforcement training and, lastly, it is developing a public

diplomacy programme to better publicize the dangers associated with being smuggled and with criminal smuggling organizations.

As members can see, the problems of trafficking in women and children are taken very seriously by the United States Government. In order to combat this terrible problem, we urge all Governments to enact and enforce laws against trafficking; institute stiff penalties for trafficking, including asset forfeiture; examine national laws regarding prostitution to determine how to discourage trafficking for purposes of prostitution and to encourage appropriate treatment for victims of trafficking; share information regarding known and suspected trafficking; mount public information programmes in source and destination countries describing the peonage conditions and violence which befall most trafficked women, prostitution and immigration laws in destination countries, as well as dealing appropriately with victims; utilize a regional, cooperative approach to combat organized, large-scale trafficking; and promote cooperation between source and destination countries.

The President: I call on the Permanent Representative of Ireland.

Mr. Campbell (Ireland): I have the honour to address this special plenary meeting on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries align themselves with this statement: Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Iceland also aligns itself with this statement.

The European Union very much welcomes the holding of this meeting as a way of marking the importance of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. This year, the International Day gives particular emphasis to trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Trafficking in persons is a phenomenon that primarily affects women, many of whom become victims at a very young age. The victims face atrocious conditions and suffer appalling treatment.

The odious practice of trafficking involves consistent and systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and requires concerted national and international action. It often leads to the break-up of families and exposes women and children to appalling sexual exploitation and abuse. In the case of children, in particular, it damages them mentally and physically, robs them of their innocence and destroys their childhood.

It is obvious that trafficking in women for sexual exploitation is becoming a serious international problem. This area of criminality is often organized by criminal groups which kidnap, imprison and force women into prostitution by the use of, at times, extreme violence and intimidation. These organized groups transcend police boundaries locally, nationally and internationally. They are making vast sums of money from these activities and some of the profits are financing other forms of crime.

The importance attached by the international community to the need to eradicate the plague of trafficking was echoed in the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing in September 1995. The Platform calls for a number of actions against trafficking to be adopted by Governments of countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as regional and international organizations, as appropriate. The Platform focuses on the need, *inter alia*, for concerted national and international law enforcement action and cooperation and on educational and training programmes aimed at vulnerable young women and girls. At the same time, it urges the adoption of measures to address the root factors which encourage trafficking. One of the key components of such a counter-strategy is the strengthening of existing legislation with a view to providing better protection for women and girls and to punishing the perpetrators through both criminal and civil measures.

The question of trafficking, *inter alia*, for commercial sexual exploitation, is of grave concern to the European Union. The Union participated actively in the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, which took place in Stockholm in August this year. We believe that the outcome of that conference has succeeded in raising awareness among many actors of society, at the national and international levels, concerning the abhorrent practices of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and will make an important contribution to highlighting the need for urgent measures aimed at combating this phenomenon. We call for the urgent implementation of the measures agreed at Stockholm.

The European Union intends to press firmly ahead with its concerted action and cooperation aimed at tackling this evil and cruel modern-day form of slavery. On Friday last, the Council of Ministers of the European Union agreed on a Joint Action on trafficking in human beings and the sexual exploitation of children, by which the member States of the Union will criminalize the

sexual exploitation of children and trafficking for that purpose. The member States will also criminalize sexual exploitation of adults and trafficking for that purpose.

The Joint Action includes provisions for jurisdiction and penalties and measures aimed at protecting victims and witnesses. The member States will introduce extraterritorial legislation aimed against sex tourists abusing children. A Joint Action extending the mandate of the European Police Office to cover trafficking in human persons was also agreed. The European Union will also invest 6.5 million ECUs over the next five years in a training and research programme for persons working in this field.

We commend the work of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. We believe that this is a valuable contribution to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child and has played a significant role in informing and enhancing this important debate. We also welcome the important work done by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) and encourage all actors to make further concerted efforts in this area.

The European Union also supports the efforts of the working group on a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and we hope that it will make further progress, prior to the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights, with a view to finalizing its work.

Another evil to be addressed in this commemoration of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery is the persistence of bonded and forced labour, especially of bonded and forced child labour. The exploitation of children in this way remains a matter of serious concern to the European Union and we call on the international community to join us in making every effort to eliminate this intolerable phenomenon.

The European Union's consideration of the issue of trafficking in women was greatly facilitated by a regional conference on the subject which the Union held in Vienna last June. Among the key proposals made at the conference were: close cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination to prevent and combat trafficking in women; the development of a more coordinated policy at the international and national levels to combat trafficking in women; special attention to respect for the victim's human dignity; high priority for information campaigns on these issues, both in the countries of origin of the trafficked women and in the receiving countries; with emphasis on raising awareness; close cooperation between non-governmental organizations, which are doing valuable work in this field in different countries; and assistance to victims with regard to such matters as medical care, accommodation, food and money, as well as legal assistance and language courses, where necessary.

A principal conclusion of the participants at the regional conference was that trafficking cannot be tackled effectively without a multidisciplinary and coordinated approach which involves all concerned parties, judicial, law enforcement and immigration authorities and non-governmental and support organizations. In that spirit, the European Commission has recently communicated proposals to the European Council and the European Parliament on trafficking in women with the purpose of stimulating a broad policy debate and promoting a coherent and multidisciplinary European approach to these issues. Included are a number of proposals to improve both international and European cooperation, whilst putting more effective measures in place at the national level. The European Union will give further consideration to this matter at a ministerial conference to be held from 24 to 26 April 1997 with a view to elaborating further measures to prevent and combat trafficking in women.

In marking the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, we must redouble our determination as an international community to respect the human rights of all persons. We must commit ourselves, in particular, to a global partnership against the sexual exploitation of children. We owe it to the memory of the victims of trafficking in human persons and to future generations to use the momentum generated by occasions such as today's to banish this scourge forever.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): At the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly in 1994, the Philippine delegation had the honour of introducing in the Third Committee a new draft resolution, entitled "Traffic in women and girls". The resolution condemned the illicit and clandestine movement of persons across national and international borders, largely from developing countries and some countries with economies in transition, with the end goal of forcing women and children into sexually and/or economically oppressive and exploitative situations for the profit of recruiters, traffickers and crime

syndicates. The resolution also condemned other illegal activities related to trafficking in human beings, such as forced domestic labour, false marriages, clandestine employment and false adoption.

The initiative was born of our deep conviction as to the inherent sacredness of the rights of all human persons, families and communities everywhere on this planet — their right to freedom, to dignity, to participation in their own governments and to development. Violence against women impairs and nullifies their enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Trafficking, or the illegal moving and selling of human beings across borders in exchange for financial or other forms of compensation, is a most dehumanizing form of violence. It removes from the victim all sense of dignity and self-worth, often subjecting her to all kinds of violence. It renders the trafficker worthy only of contempt. It is a crime against humanity and is particularly heinous when it is perpetuated upon children. Trafficking in women and children, in particular for sexual purposes, is a contemporary form of slavery that brings in multi-million-dollar profits to traffickers and nothing for the victims except shame, disability and disease, violence and even death.

The resolution on the traffic in women and girls has been updated every year since 1994 in an effort to fight and, hopefully, eliminate this scourge. Last year's resolution 50/167 decided to focus the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December 1996, on the problem of trafficking in human persons, especially women and children, and to devote one meeting of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly to the discussion of this problem. Although this meeting could not be held on the designated day because of scheduling constraints, we are nevertheless thankful that the United Nations has given us this day to draw the attention of the world to the transnational crime of trafficking in human beings, considered by many to be the third most serious illegal trade after drugs and weapons, but no less evil.

I shall therefore try to make good use of the time we have today to speak on the problem of trafficking by submitting the following recommendations.

First, at the international level, priority must be given to the ratification and enforcement of international conventions and instruments on human rights, the traffic in persons and slavery. There are those of us who see a need for a new convention on trafficking, but the urgency attached to the problem would not be served by the long negotiating process that normally precedes the adoption of a new convention or treaty, nor would scarce resources contribute to the feasibility of such a project. It would be more useful, in our view, merely to amend the old 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others in order to provide it with a wider view of trafficking and exploitation to include forced marriages and forced labour within the concept, and also to provide it with a monitoring mechanism.

As for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the envisioned optional protocol to the Convention would deal explicitly with the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

The Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women covers a broad range of issues related to trafficking. Similarly, the outcome of the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children provides a wide range of recommendations for dealing with the problem.

At the national level, priority should be given to the strengthening of existing legislation and, where none exists, the adoption of new legislation to protect the rights of women and children by criminalizing trafficking in all its forms, by penalizing all offenders involved, including intermediaries, whether their offence was committed in their own or in a foreign country, and by penalizing persons in authority found guilty of sexually abusing victims of trafficking who are in their custody. It is equally important that measures be taken to ensure that victims are not themselves penalized.

Standard minimum humanitarian treatment, consistent with human rights standards, should be accorded to victims of trafficking, with appropriate assistance for their repatriation to their home countries and reintegration into their home societies.

Appropriate training should be given to law enforcement officers and others who come into contact with victims of trafficking to sensitize them to the special needs of such victims. The assistance of non-governmental organizations is particularly valuable in this respect, including in the healing process of various traumas resulting from trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence.

It is critically important to make an all-out effort to ensure the dismantling of national, regional and

international trafficking networks if the problem is to be eradicated. To do this, cooperation and political will are needed in equal measure.

It is a long and difficult road that we must travel, but the sacrifices that will be demanded of each of us will not begin to compensate for the pain of thousands of women who have been trafficked like so much merchandise and of the children from whose eyes innocence has been prematurely snuffed out. But let us begin now to find ways to help those who have fallen and to prevent others from meeting the same fate. Together, there is much that we can accomplish.

The President: I call on the Permanent Representative of Mongolia.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): It is my great honour to speak on behalf of the member States of the Asian Group on the occasion of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery.

As is well known, the International Bill of Human Rights, and in particular article 8 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, states:

> "No one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave-trade in all their forms shall be prohibited." *(Resolution 2200 (XXI), annex)*

Yet, despite the universal condemnation, slavery-like practices remain a grave and persistent problem in the closing years of the twentieth century. That is exactly why the General Assembly, in resolution 50/167, decided specifically to consider the problem of trafficking in human persons, especially women and children, at the plenary level. The growing awareness of the international community of the problem of trafficking in women and children is reflected in the final documents adopted recently at international conferences, especially the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others continues to be the main international legal instrument on the subject. It is unfortunate that less than half of the States Members of the United Nations have joined the Convention. It is hoped that more States will consider acceding to the Convention within the framework of the overall efforts to combat this contemporary form of slavery. Furthermore, in order to enhance the Convention's effectiveness, the possibility of strengthening it with a monitoring system of compliance by States parties should be explored.

The other legal instruments related to the problem of trafficking in women and children are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is important that the States parties to those Conventions to consider including in their periodical reports information on trafficking, as recommended by the relevant bodies. It should be noted that, in recent years, a number of United Nations organizations have also been undertaking various steps, of both a practical and standard-setting nature, to address the problem of trafficking in women and children.

Notwithstanding all this, the expanding magnitude of the traffic in women and children in all its manifestations calls for an urgent and adequate international response. The member States of the Asian Group, like others, strongly believe that the consideration of this problem today, on the occasion of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, is particularly timely and, undoubtedly, will help to reinforce anew the political will on the part of the international community to combat collectively this pernicious form of slavery.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports of Andorra.

Mrs. Sala Sansa (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan: interpretation from French text furnished by the delegation*): Since its admission to membership of the United Nations in 1993, the Principality of Andorra has worked to develop as a priority its active participation in the defence of respect for human rights and tolerance. It has also sought to attach special importance to the role of children and youth in society, among other things. A dynamic policy in defence of human rights cannot be complete without an ongoing evaluation of the status of women and their opportunities for advancement in all societies of the world. In Andorran society, ongoing rapid changes in the social fabric over the past 30 years have allowed for the recognition of the status of women and their ongoing participation in all areas of public and social life. The fact that a female Minister of the Government of Andorra is addressing the General Assembly is very clear proof of that. It is a great honour

for me, especially since I am the first woman from my country to speak here.

Last year, the efforts of the international community were focused on Beijing. It was a memorable meeting, in which Andorra also participated. Our United Nations Ambassador participated in the preparatory meetings. The Consul General, Madame Ferrer, represented our country at the Fourth World Conference on Women. We have carefully studied the conclusions and appreciate the results of that Conference. However, specific obstacles remain that prevent women from enjoying real equality and the human rights guaranteed to all human beings. The problems identified at the Conference should be dealt with urgently. There are still too many women who are victims to slavery-like and dehumanizing trafficking and are reduced to prostitution and a total denial of the respect befitting a human being. In the late twentieth century, we are still hiding behind considerations for the cultural differences between various human groups as a way of justifying the mutilation, discrimination and economic impoverishment of women. A third of the world population lives in absolute poverty and 70 per cent of that third are women.

We welcome here the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women to promote economic opportunities for women and to give them control of their destinies through micro-credits, which have operated so well in States such as Bangladesh, and other measures empowering women in economic decision-making.

There is no specific programme for the advancement of women. To advance the status of women, a global policy including all phases of human development is necessary. First, it is imperative to encourage women's education, which will provide them with the necessary tools of awareness and capacity for self-improvement. Two hundred years after Mrs. Wollstonecraft and Mrs. Adams championed female education, we must ensure that female unemployment is not the result of the mediocre schooling of women. Article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, which Andorra ratified, calls for equal rights in education. The education of girls should inspire a sense of equality, ability and independence; the education of boys should inspire respect for the principle of equal opportunity for men and women.

In respect of adults, Governments and international agencies must do their utmost to eliminate all forms of discrimination and segregation in education and in access to the civil service, public life and the labour market. The United Nations must continue its policy of integrating women into its civil service. All forms of violence against women must also cease. This includes economic, social, political, physical and even sexual violence.

In the third millennium, relations of force between human beings must become relations of justice if we want to be defined as members of the civilization of human rights. We must also consider very seriously the grave problem of violence against migrant women. We share the concern on this subject expressed by the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

Andorra has a growing interest in the United Nations Economic and Social Council and hopes soon to be able to participate in its work. The Council's resolution 1996/16 establishes a medium-term plan for the years 1996-2001 for the advancement of women. We will follow its effects very carefully.

When we stop to reflect on the advancement of women, especially now on the threshold of a new century, we must express pleasure at the fact that we have seen real progress — giant steps — in the equalizing of opportunities for men and women, especially in the past 10 years. Unfortunately, these steps have not been equal throughout the planet nor have they reached all levels of society. This concept is broad and the post-Beijing task is an enormous one. For Andorra's part, we will assist in every possible way.

(spoke in French)

On this day of commemoration of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, we feel it particularly important to consider issues concerning women. Although the problem of slavery today is not exclusive to women, it is of special concern to them. As a representative of a State that has enjoyed more than seven centuries of freedom, a State whose citizens — both men and women — were free even in the Middle Ages, I am duty-bound to hold high the banner of freedom and to be moved by the horror of slavery, sexual exploitation or exploitation of labour. This is a situation in which so many children, and especially so many young girls, are living today. The fact that slavery still exists today, although sometimes well disguised, is a disgrace for humankind. States Members of the United Nations must therefore be firmly resolved to eliminate this phenomenon

once and for all. I can promise the Assembly today that Andorra will stand among its ranks.

Mr. Reyn (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): First of all, I would like to associate myself with the statement of the Irish representative on behalf of the Presidency of the European Union.

The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery and its modern manifestation — the trafficking in human beings — is primarily a time for reflection in order to denounce and publicly condemn this tumour which humankind has not yet been able to expunge. It should also prompt us to support and strengthen the considerable efforts that have been made by the United Nations to put an end to this scourge. We cannot close our eyes to the truth of our world and then reopen them to the myth that would qualify the traffic in human beings as a new incarnation of geographical disparities and of differences between the economic systems governing our societies. The truth is that relations of force established between the exploiter and the exploited, between executioner and victim, could not care less about the social and economic system in which they occur. At the end of the twentieth century, nothing can justify any form of exploitation, wherever it may occur, of man by man.

The traffic in women is one of those crimes that has deep historical roots. From the beginning of this century, and before the founding of the United Nations, international legal instruments were prepared in order to stem its most nefarious effects. The 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others remains a reference point for the international community in its campaign against the exploitation of women, in particular in the field of prostitution.

Since that time, the definition of trafficking has been expanded to include other forms of exploitation, such as forced marriage and labour. Furthermore, the emergence of international criminality linked to various forms of trafficking and the ease of communications and movement favour the establishment of transnational networks specialized in trafficking, prostitution and other forms of exploitation.

The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing echoed the constantly growing concern of the international community about these new realities and the need to strengthen cooperation. While the strategy it promotes is aimed at the better implementation of legal instruments on the traffic in human beings and slavery, it also provides for other measures, such as the allocation of sufficient resources to reintegrate victims into society and the development of preventive measures through education and training.

The campaign to eliminate trafficking in women requires, among other things, cooperation and coordination among the United Nations agencies specializing in the field of human rights and women's rights, as well as among the bodies entrusted with the monitoring and the implementation by signatory States of international conventions established in this field. To that, I would add the input of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, whose activities in the area of combating organized crime are of particular importance here.

Over the past few years, Belgium, for its part, has taken many initiatives on the domestic level to define and develop a structural policy against trafficking in human persons. In April 1995, the Belgian Parliament adopted a new law providing criminal penalties for anyone who, in helping a foreign person to enter or remain on the territory of the Kingdom, uses any form of constraint against that person.

Belgium has also adopted a series of targeted measures and regulations to guarantee assistance for victims of trafficking, as well as for the defence of their rights, by providing them in particular with a temporary residence permit and social assistance.

Against this background, the Belgian Government supported the establishment of specialized reception centres to provide social, psychological and medical assistance to the victims, as well as legal assistance within the framework of judicial proceedings begun against the guilty parties. In this respect, the victims can bring an independent action for damages and redress for the harm that they have suffered. It should also be noted that, on a bilateral level, Belgium has initiated a pilot project with the Philippines devoted to the problems of the sexual exploitation of nationals of that country in Belgium. The eventual evaluation of that project will make it possible to extend it to other countries that are particularly at risk.

Several months ago, the abduction of four young children, followed by the discovery of their deaths in particularly horrible conditions, profoundly shook the conscience of our compatriots. These tragic events

brought to an end — if that was necessary — the myth that only those countries subject to major economic difficulties are affected by the sexual exploitation of their children. In fact, every day, more and more children throughout the world are subjected to particularly repulsive forms of exploitation. This occurs in flagrant violation of the provisions of all international instruments aimed at guaranteeing their protection, rights and dignity.

The events to which I have just referred coincided with the work of the World Congress against Commercial Exploitation of Children, which was held in Stockholm in August 1996. The great many States, that were represented there undertook, in adopting a Declaration and Agenda for Action, to support a global partnership against the sexual exploitation of children for commercial purposes. In our view, the implementation of the Stockholm recommendations is one of the most solid cornerstones of the efforts of the international community, which must be undertaken as a matter of urgency to put an end to this particularly pernicious form of modern-day slavery.

During the course of the work that it has just concluded, the Third Committee adopted what in our view was a very substantial draft resolution on the rights of children, which should be endorsed by the General Assembly. Belgium is particularly pleased by the fact that this document takes up the main recommendations of the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action, and that it supports the activities of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery to prepare an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child with regard to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Belgium is in favour of the adoption of a binding instrument which, supplementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, would have the effect of compelling the signatory States to rank practices linked to the sexual exploitation of children as penal offences, so that they can be punished under criminal law. The preparations for the additional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child relating to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography that are now in progress should also commit the future signatories to take necessary measures to give their courts worldwide competence to ensure prosecution and punishment of these acts, wherever they are committed.

The need to punish those guilty of these abhorrent crimes cannot, however, allow us lose sight of the extremely painful consequences of such acts for the victims, or the urgent need for measures to be taken for prevention, protection and the reintegration of the victims into society. The eradication of these practices requires cooperation and the consistent implementation of a set of measures at the global as well as the regional and national levels. It was also in that spirit that, following the World Congress in Stockholm, several activities have been undertaken within the European Union, some of which are already in place. These were referred to in the statement made by the Irish presidency.

In today's world, the most widespread form of the exploitation of children is child labour. The International Labour Organization (ILO) very recently published an important report entitled "Child Labour. Targeting the intolerable". The report describes, in illuminating terms, the exploitation and mistreatment of children in forced labour, as well as national and international practices and legislation relating to it. It proposes concrete measures to free children from the most intolerable forms of labour: debt bondage, forced labour, slavery, prostitution and dangerous activities that can seriously jeopardize their health.

If, until recently, child labour was not at the forefront of our concerns, whether nationally or internationally, we should note that attitudes, thinking, and in some cases, policies have radically changed in this regard under the pressure of an increasing number of widely different parties arguing very legitimately in defence of children. Child labour is a complex issue, but it is alarming because of both the extremely high number of children involved and the harmful consequences that working at too young an age can have on the growth and development of children, as well as on the economic and social development of countries that use child labour on a massive scale.

For many reasons, particularly economic ones, the elimination of child labour can only be gradual. The attainment of this objective will require the mobilization and concerted cooperation of States, international organizations, specialized agencies of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and civil society, as well as the implementation of assistance programmes and, in particular, investment in basic educational services.

The available human and material resources must, as a matter of priority, be earmarked promptly in the service of a global strategy so as to lead as quickly as possible to the eradication of the most intolerable forms of child labour, and of practices that might be likened to

forms of slavery in this area. Belgium also supports the orientations and programmes of action proposed in this area by the ILO. In particular, Belgium encourages the International Labour Office to continue, without respite, its work in this field, in addition to the preparation of a new legal instrument aimed at prohibiting all intolerable forms of child labour.

As we celebrate this Day, I believe that we should take the trouble to look for a brief moment at our own lives. Let us have the courage to think about our own children and our own families. Let us think about the appalling tragedy of forced separation, the horrible wounds of rape and the physical and moral suffering that could strike those in the world who are dearest to us. It is in that spirit that my delegation would like to confirm the will and determination of my country to join in the efforts of the international community to eliminate once and for all these evils: the traffic in human beings and the exploitation of children.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Canada.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): Today, as we commemorate the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, all Member States of the United Nations have an ideal opportunity to give urgent attention to a growing international problem, and a modern form of slavery: trafficking in human persons. This is also an appropriate time for Canada to speak about this issue, as this is our National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, in commemoration of the 14 young women who were so tragically shot down on this date in 1989 at the École Polytechnique in Montreal.

At last year's General Assembly, it was decided that in 1996 we would focus world attention on the problem of trafficking in human persons, particularly women and children. This trade is a violation of human rights and a particularly heinous form of violence against women. It is an affront to the basic principles underlying all human rights — dignity and respect for persons as set out in the preamble and article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is a multifaceted problem requiring a multidisciplinary response involving migration policies, judicial systems, law enforcement and police cooperation, as well as preventive and rehabilitation measures.

We are facing an enormous transboundary problem. Women and children are being sold into sexual and other forms of servitude, ending up in prostitution and degradation. This problem cannot be tackled by any one country alone. It can only be adequately addressed by countries working together. In recognition of the serious nature of the problem, trafficking is receiving increasing international attention. Many countries in every region are taking measures to address the problem. The Philippines, in particular, is to be commended for leading efforts to encourage the relevant organs of the United Nations system to address the issue. We support the work being done in the various United Nations forums and stress that, in order to formulate appropriate strategies and avoid duplication, coordination of efforts is essential.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada has made the protection of the human rights of women and children a centrepiece of its domestic and foreign policy. Consequently, we continue to stress the importance of addressing the issue of trafficking from a human rights perspective as well as from a criminal justice and law enforcement perspective. Any international initiatives on the traffic in persons must fully respect international human rights covenants, standards and norms. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women emphasizes that violence against women, including trafficking, is a violation of their human rights. The Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights is also studying the issue. It was of course considered in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action emanating from the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women last year.

With respect to the traffic in children, and in particular the commercial sexual exploitation of children, Canada strongly supports the initiatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to encourage maximum cooperation with United Nations human rights bodies, particularly the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the thematic and country rapporteurs, and especially the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Canada considers that international initiatives in the area of trafficking in women and children should contribute to a clear and coherent definition of traffic in persons and be relevant to the contemporary forms of sexual exploitation.

Canada participated actively at the Conference on Trafficking in Women for sexual exploitation convened

by the European Commission in June this year. We fully supported the human rights focus adopted at the Conference, as well as the recommendations for future work on the issue. These include closer cooperation among countries of destination, countries of origin and transit countries, improved information exchange, training and awareness programmes for officials, information campaigns aimed at potential victims of trafficking, and assistance for repatriation. To combat trafficking in migrants in general, and trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation specifically, effective policies must, we believe, take a victim-centred approach. We must ensure that our enforcement efforts focus on the criminals who are doing the trafficking rather than on the victims. The only durable solutions lie in expanded multilateral cooperation.

Trafficking in children also often takes the form of commercial sexual exploitation. Protecting children from this is a priority issue for Canada and the international community as demonstrated by the Declaration and Agenda for Action adopted at the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Stockholm in August this year. Canada is moving to join other States in enacting legislation to permit the prosecution, in domestic courts, of our nationals and permanent residents who engage in prostitution-related activities with children while travelling abroad.

Canada's Secretary of State for the Status of Women, who attended the Stockholm Conference, is meeting today with representatives of the Canadian travel and tourism industries and non-governmental agencies to discuss measures to protect children from sex tourism. We are working with other countries to ensure successful completion of work to draft an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning the sale of children, child pornography and child prostitution.

Trafficking in women and girls is linked to broader migration issues. These in turn are connected to national and international security questions such as transnational organized crime. Canada, like many other countries, views with increasing concern the problem of trafficking in migrants, or people-smuggling. The Canadian Government has responded with specific legislative sanctions to combat illegal migration. Our Immigration Act includes in its objectives the need

> "to promote international order and justice by denying the use of Canadian territory to persons who are likely to engage in criminal activity".

Canada also works with the international travel industry to help control trafficking and encourages closer cooperation among Governments confronting the issue, through regional and multinational forums. Canada will continue to explore with other Governments new avenues to establish cooperative arrangements on greater technological compatibility, harmonizing policies, exchanging information and sharing common tasks. The challenge is to control illegal migration while respecting international obligations to offer refuge to those fleeing persecution.

We urge Governments to work together to address the issue of trafficking, especially trafficking in women and girls, at its roots: the economic, cultural, social, legal, political and other bases of inequality that lead to the violations of human rights of women and children and render them vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Trafficking is a complex problem, often involving many different elements such as coercion, violence, prostitution, drug trafficking and use, health risks, forced labour and other crimes. The involvement of organized crime and individual criminals is clearly substantial.

The way forward is improved coordination and collaboration between Governments and non-governmental sectors, including business, the media, law enforcers, community leaders, politicians, parents and children. Law enforcement alone will not of course solve the problem. For these reasons, we will continue to work in concert with concerned delegations at the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to develop workable international solutions. Canada recognizes trafficking in human persons as a major international issue, and believes that lasting solutions can be found only through enhanced international cooperation based on full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Norway.

Mr. Biørn Lian (Norway): The celebration today of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery is scarred by the sad reality that modern forms of slavery continue to exist, particularly in abominable practices such as trafficking in human persons for sexual exploitation and forced labour, including minors. The main victims of trafficking are women and girls. The international community has a special obligation to protect the victims of such modern forms of slavery.

It is the firm hope of the Government of Norway that the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing will be implemented by all countries. They should ratify and enforce international conventions on trafficking in persons and on slavery. The root causes of trafficking, in countries of origin, transit and destination, must be addressed.

The extent of trafficking in and forced prostitution of children has horrified the international community. It is a matter of concern to all of us. The First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in August 1996, was instrumental in raising awareness about such crimes. It must be followed up by actions on the part of Governments and international organizations in order to help victims, prosecute offenders and prevent further exploitation. In Norway we are hard at work to implement measures against all kinds of sexual abuse of children.

Norway supports the idea of a new European convention on forced prostitution and trafficking in women. We believe that such a legal instrument should also encompass children and men. Norway is also following up the work of the Council of Europe on trafficking in women. Trafficking and prostitution are often part of international organized crime and connected to other crimes such as drug trafficking. They represent major threats to society and thus ought to be of primary concern to us all.

Child labour is another matter of great concern to my Government. Often in such cases minors are treated as bonded labour or as workers in slave-like conditions, with little or no compensation to the child. It is against this background that the Norwegian Government has decided to convene an international conference on child labour, which is scheduled to take place in Oslo in October 1997.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Jamaica.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): I first wish to associate my delegation with the statement made earlier by the Permanent Representative of Mexico on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

We have come here, once again, to commemorate the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. For most people, this Day is observed with celebration; for others, with despair. For while the world has witnessed the outlawing of an economic and social system once considered to be natural, prohibition has not rendered the practice of slavery extinct. In many parts of our world, even in places otherwise considered to be free, people are kidnapped and sold into bondage of one sort or another, abused and mistreated.

It seems that only a short time has passed since we welcomed the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa. Jamaica, which supported the people of South Africa in their struggle against apartheid, rejoiced at that event, which signalled the onset of a new era for that nation, for the African continent and for the people of the diaspora — the stolen children of Africa and the victims of the cruel system of slavery and the slave trade.

For, as Jamaicans and other descendants of the Middle Passage know all too well, slavery is more than just an event. It is a process by which the persons involved — both slaves and captors — are conditioned mentally, spiritually and emotionally. Freedom, when it arrives, does so too late for this total conditioning to be easily reversed. Freedom heralds the beginning of a painful and often frustrating rebirth, in which learned actions, ideas and feelings are suddenly no longer useful, and new attitudes have to be adopted in their place. In my own country, the annual commemoration of Emancipation Day on 1 August serves as a reminder of our past, and, therefore, as a guide to our future.

One year after we met at Beijing for the Fourth World Conference on Women, and in this, the fiftieth anniversary year of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), it is quite fitting that we devote our observance to the problem of trafficking in persons, especially women and children. I cannot overemphasize nor even describe our utter revulsion at the mere thought of persons in this predicament. We have read with growing concern the Secretary-General's report on trafficking in women and girls, which stressed that this phenomenon is growing and expanding. The increased targeting by sex slavers of two of the most vulnerable groups of persons in society is something which the United Nations, as a voice of the international community, cannot ignore.

The Jamaican Government condemns in the strongest terms those who perpetuate this gross crime. At the same time, we are very cognizant that economic factors often contribute to the growth of trafficking in and exploitation of women and children.

The system of slavery in Jamaica and the Caribbean was not terminated only by abolitionists wielding torches

and through moral pressure and outrage. It is true that those courageous men and women played a catalytic role in the delegitimization of slavery and waged a relentless struggle for its abolition. But the die was cast only when the perpetrators of the system realized that it was no longer of economic benefit to them. At that time, the slave system — which had become a serious liability to its creators — had to be destroyed.

In the same way, today's versions of slavery exist because there are all-too-powerful persons and organizations which depend on the trafficking trade for their earnings. Only when there is no gold to be mined from this trade will it cease to flourish.

The international community needs, therefore, to ensure that we do not support, either directly or indirectly, any activities related to the trafficking in persons, particularly the international sex trade. We must, if we are serious about ending this evil business, strike at its very core, by, *inter alia*, increasing cooperation among law enforcement agencies and enacting effective legislation to prevent and counter sex tourism, as called for in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. We also urge all States which have not yet done so to ratify the 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, as well as the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. We also express our hope for the speedy implementation of the recommendations of the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm earlier this year.

It is long past the time for the international community to be making apologies in respect of this issue. Let us commit ourselves to finding concrete solutions to these problems, so that one day, when we speak of commemorating the abolition of slavery, it will indeed be a total celebration.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the discussion held in connection with the observance of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 103.

I should like to invite delegates to remain seated, as immediately following the adjournment of this meeting I shall have the honour to preside over an informal segment in connection with the observance of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. At the informal segment, delegations will hear statements by the Acting Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, by a representative of a non-governmental organization, and by a victim of trafficking.

The President took the Chair.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to make an announcement concerning the consideration of reports of the Main Committees.

As already announced, the General Assembly will consider the reports of the First Committee on Tuesday, 10 December, in the afternoon. I will now announce the schedule for the consideration of the reports of the Second, Third, Fourth and Sixth Committees, in the order in which the Assembly will consider the reports.

The reports of the Third Committee will be considered on Thursday, 12 December, in the afternoon; the reports of the Fourth Committee on Friday, 13 December, in the morning; the reports of the Sixth Committee on Monday, 16 December, in the morning; and the reports of the Second Committee on Monday, 16 December, in the afternoon.

On Friday, 13 December, in the morning, the Assembly will also consider agenda item 19, "Implementation of the Declaration of the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples". I should like to point out that there are still some agenda items for which no date has yet been indicated. I will announce the dates for the consideration of those items as soon as they are scheduled. I will also keep the Assembly informed of any additions or changes.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.